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ABSTRACT

Students from different ethnic backgrounds respond differently to a mutually experienced school environment. In this study, 804 students in five multiethnic urban middle schools in New York State were surveyed using the Elementary and Secondary Environment Index, a companion to the Organizational Climate Index. Each school's population was broken down into Black, White, Hispanic, Oriental, and other or multiethnic groups. Responses to the survey were analyzed to determine the factors that affected the students' perceptions of their school's organizational climate. Findings include the following: (1) ethnicity and socioeconomic status were more important in determining differences in perception than was ability; (2) social issues were not separated from academic issues and teachers; (3) teachers were perceived as interested in the students but sometimes suspicious, and often angry; (4) Black and White students differed most in their motivation and interests; and (5) Hispanic students had totally different perceptions from their Black and White classmates. Curriculum development should focus on peer problem solving skills, the development of social awareness, and communication skills. Four tables of statistical data and a list of references are included. (FMW)

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Ethnic Differences in Dealing with Experiences in Multiethnic Middle Schools

Presented at the Urban Educational Research Conference
Long Island University, April 15th, 1988

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Introduction:

The present study invesitgates differences in how middle school students perceive, respond to and cognitively deal with common events. The treatment they receive in school might be slightly different from that received by other students; they may systemmatically respond to events in certain ways; but, this study indicates that in responding to questions about a mutually-experienced school environments, students from different ethnic backgrounds have significantly different perceptions of common events. The purpose of this paper is to explore a few of these differences for urban teachers. Accordingly, teachers may understand more about their students and thus be able to do a better job in helping more students to get more out of school, and in helping students from different backgrounds learn to get along better than before.

We asked 804 multiethnic middle school students to respond to a 61 item questionnaire about the climate of their schools. These students attended five multiethnic middle schools in Nassau, Queens, Westchester and Suffolk Counties in New York State. Socioeconomic status and ethnicity were included together as a covariates in a look at perceptions of organizational climate. This yielded many F-ratio values on factors significant at the .0001 level. In the second part of this analysis we are investigating the possibility of different factor structures, according to ethnic group identity, showing the differences in the cognitive organization of information about common organizational environments.

The 804 middle school students included in the study were in five New York State multiethnic middle schools selected for the multiethnic characteristics of their schools. Students in these schools were from every ability level, and every grade. Students were from every socioeconomic category. There was one low ability class in School C that was unable to complete the questionnaires when asked to do so. Otherwise these students willingly participated in the study.

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Table 1:
Summary of Students By Ethnic Identity and School

Ethnic Group:	School: A	B	C	D	E	Total
Black	49.5%	26.4%	24.9%	24.5%	51.4%	253
White	40.0%	31.8%	55.1%	16.5%	4.7%	244
Hispanic	5.3%	33.1%	13.2%	46.2%	34.6%	233
Oriental	2.1%	--	1.0%	7.2%	--	22
Other & Multi-:	3.2%	8.9%	4.8%	5.6%	4.0%	52
School N=	95	148	205	249	107	804

Theoretical Framework:

The Organizational Climate Construct:

In 1936 Kurt Lewin developed Field Theory: "Every scientific psychology must take into account whole situations, i.e., the state of both the person and the environment." (Stern, 1971, pp. 3-4). In 1938 Field Theory was developed by H.A. Murray in a taxonomy of personalities. In his writing he said: "...a statistical answer leaves unexplained the uncommon (exhibited-by-the majority) response....Averages obliterate the 'individual characters of individual organisms' (Whitehead), and so fail to reveal the complex interaction of forces which determine each concrete event." (Murray, pp. ix-x).

Based upon these theoretical foundations George Stern developed the organizational climate construct stating the formula: **[B = f (N x P)]**. That is to say, Behavior is a function of personality Needs and environmental Press. Organizational climate is defined as the organizational counterpart of personality. In a manner of speaking, organizations have personalities too. If we walk into a school building we immediately have a feeling about the place as a happy place, or a serious place; a place where children do a lot of art work; where there are alot of nurturing relationships among teachers and children. Whatever we might say about individual personalities, we can say much the same thing about schools. (Halpin, pp. 131-2; Stern, p. 5).

The Climate Construct as a Means of studying Ethnolinguistic and Cultural Perceptions:

Perception and experience are closely intertwined and connected together. New events are defined in terms of what is previously known. Information is withdrawn from the stimulation of the moment and interpreted and categorized in terms of past experiences. Individuals tend too perceive

experiences in the way they expect to perceive them and fit them together with previously known sets of information. Events are perceived and understood in terms of previously known cultural symbols, values, norms, terms and roles (Hollander, p. 127-131).

The basis of social events occurs within the boundaries of the experienced situation, which is social and interpersonal. People may contemplate, analyze and plan in solitude, but behavior and interpersonal learning take place in encounters with other persons. Social controls demand a limited range of behaviors from the individual. The person's own needs, such as the need for acceptance from others, provides the condition under which the individual conforms to external demands The individual will respond only to those external forces which he is perceiving and experiencing at the time. The person's internal condition may cause him to repress various environmental stimuli. (Moment and Zaleznick, p. 5)

Human beings are not on the earth alone, nor are they apart in group endeavors, they are dependant upon the sensitivity of the particular language which is the instrument of processing behavior for their society. The concrete universe is spontaneously built up on the language habits of the group because the language customs of a group compel definite choices for interpretation. (Sapir, pp. 75-93)

It was discovered that the linguistic arrangements of a language is not simply an imitative mechanism for voicing ideas but rather is the configuration for ideas, the guidelines for introspective activity, for cogitation of thoughts, for formulation of mental activities. Conception of ideas is not an free lance procedure, but is part of the characteristic grammar. We examine substance connected with rules determined by native language. We cut reality up, arrange it into ideas , and attribute importance to them as we do, because we are participant in a compact to conceptualize in this way--an agreement that accommodates the entire speech community and is systematic in the standards of our language and behavior. (Whorf, pp. 212-13).

Every language and every specialized sublanguage includes different issues, values and boundaries that curb against divergent points of view. For discrete linguistic frameworks moulded with the accents of science, together with the matrix of European culture from which those sciences have arisen and cherished as innocuous reason "--have been worked to death." (Whorf, p. 247).

"And every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relation-

ship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness." (Whorf, p. 252). Language executed this synthetic chopping up of the continuous spread and flow of existence in a distinctive manner. The con-figurations guiding word arrangements are more important than the words included in the sentences. "Words and speech are not the same thing." (p. 353)

Whorf opened up the issue of the basic patterns of linguistically regulated knowledge: the cultural essentials of group interchange, manners of speaking, compulsive forms of invariable behavior, the particular impact of community accomplished patterns of social relationships, frameworks of semantic and cognitive understanding. (Bernstein, p. 159).

Whenever societal communities are recognized, the conception formed by these names is subject to the caprice of demographic change. A language disappears with the men who speak it. The structure of language is protected by the need to ensure understanding. Language is sensitive to the influence of demographic metamorphosis , but only in so far as its function is not impaired. (Levi-Strauss, pp. 14, 21, 66-67, 116-17).

Slobin writing about the psycholinguistic processes involved in learning language in school says language has been looked upon as a "window to the mind." But, he says that the mind cannot be seen, it leaves clues, like traces in a cloud chamber; it is more like trying to discern the workings of the mind from traces of speech. Speech is behavior which goes from thoughts to words. Constituents of the cognitive patterns of behavior are related to syntax, semantics, grammar and linguistic meanings synthesized in "time" and related to some array of knowledge, social conventions and linguistic conceptions. Culture, language and experience are the basis for thinking and collection of ideas into a time-ordered entity. (pp. 2-6).

Grammar makes it practical to leave much of the intention of a message implicit. Speaker and listener share the grammar, so the essential conceptual notions need not be communicated directly. They are part of the upbringing and common knowledge of language users. The existence of implicit knowledge is "....One of the main reasons human languages have complex grammars is that time constraints make it impossible to express everything explicitly in the give-and-take of ongoing communication. Communication relies on shared knowledge--knowledge of the language and also knowledge of the world. It is not always easy to pull these aspects of language apart." (Slobin, pp. 9-10).

Underlying the student's experiences in school, all behavior and perceptions are tangled up together with ethnic, linguistic and cultural experiences. Experiences with a group

of peers from a particular neighborhood, who may attend the same school, are influential factors in what students experience: how they perceive events around them; the fashion in which they experience it and the style with which they react to situations.

Cultural characteristics among an ethnic group include behavioral standards, customs, beliefs, interpersonal practices, etiquette, sanctions and disciplinary practices, acquired habits, and ways of thinking and doing things. These are socially learned and transmitted aspects of social interaction; systems of interrelated and interdependent patterns of response among a distinctive community of people.

Jones has suggested a proposition for viewing organizational complicity by various levels of group members in the productivity of an organization. Jones suggests that "culture acts as a cognitive map that influences the way in which the context is defined," for it provides the selection of "norms and values through which people enact events...."shared knowledge of social structure,...consists instead and entirely in the enforceable character of actions in compliance with the expectatancies of everyday life as a morality." (Jones, p. 454).

Notice should be given the diverse experiences students may have in school. Students are members of the organizational bureaucracy, as are teachers and school administrators. They contribute toward the personality of the school's culture even though they do not have 'employment rights,' or sense of 'tenure;' although they should have a sense of a legal right to schooling. As you will see, multiethnic middle schools have extraordinarily complex social environments.

Methodology:

In this study 804 middle school students responded to the *Elementary and Secondary Environment Index*, student response companion to the *Organizational Climate Index* developed by George Stern. This questionnaire contains 61 true-false questions about their school. In asking students to react to questions about the organizational climate of their school, the children may react in terms of their personal understanding and involvement in school.

Part of what the students are reacting to in this study is a somewhat different set of experiences than other students in the same schools. Part of what they are reacting to is another way of seeing the school experiences; along with diverse interpretations and distinct frames of reference.

In responding "true," or "false" to the climate questions, one of the questions asks, "Many student desks or locker

are messy, some even dirty." This is a fairly concrete example of something that can be seen on any given day. Yet, students from fairly meticulous homes would perceive these lockers as dirty, and children from unkempt homes would perceive them as clean.

Extending this thought to other questions would cause us to see that the students react within cultural frames of reference. Functioning within a given frame of reference causes students to perceive common school events in accordance with group background and experience, causing perceived experiences to cluster together at varying levels of importance. Differing behavioral treatments of the students in other cultural groups causes them to respond in an aloof manner to the leadership of the teacher whose disciplinary ideas represent those of another cultural group. (Heath, 1983)

Given the opportunity to do so, people "...gravitate toward places with others who share the same personal idiosyncrasies and there behave typically in ways that are consistent with the specific setting in which they have come together (Stern, p. 1). Group identity begins with ready-made endowments shared with others according to birth, language, religion, family, custom and identifiable cultural symbols. These identifiable symbols are attached to prior experiences that make the person feel comfortable with others that are trusted and with whom one feels a bond of commonality. (Glazer and Moynihan, pp. 31-33).

The difficulty is not with the subjective aspects of behavioral observation, but in "the complexity of interaction forms." (Stern, p. 184) Administering a school for younger adolescents becomes a momentous responsibility when one realizes that there are noteworthy dissimilarities in perceptions of everyday school events. The schools studied tend to have a few formidable difficulties; none of these schools seemed to have any after-school activities and there seemed to be a small degree of disorganization in all of them. The surface differences we would see in these schools extend far deeper than skin pigmentation.

Given that teachers must communicate and motivate; administrators must deal with disciplinary problems and issues; and cooperating individuals must come together to agree on common goals; what about a school where everyone perceives things according to various systems of thought? The first part of the study controlled for school differences so that all data could be pooled together. The second part of the analysis groups the students so that factor analytic pro-cedures can be performed for each ethnic group. Overall school issues are not a problem in this study; rather, the concern is the distinctive comprehension of environment

based upon cultural background and upbringing is the issue as it impacts upon the overall flow of school relationships.

Attention was given to data which combined ethnic groups and socioeconomic status together as covariates. Covariate analysis was used so that schools could be controlled as a variable and the data could be studied as a whole. In this case there were very exceptional differences in all of the organizational factors. These differences were significant beyond the .0001 level.

Three identical factor analytic studies were performed on the data in accordance with ethnic groupings of middle school students. From the existing data set, data were selected according to the ethnic identification of the students. As you will see the data pool was large enough to have a substantial data source for each ethnically-based factor analytic study.

We wanted to see if the students from different ethnic groups would perceive the organizational climate of their schools according to different cognitive patterns or arrangements. Factor analysis is a method for determining the nature of underlying variables among a large number of measures. If items seem to be measuring the same thing they will load together on the same factor. A factor is a construct indicating correlations among large data sets. All items load to some extent on all factors, but usually these factor loadings are so small that this is meaningless information. Items with factor loadings less than + or -.30 have been eliminated from the table below. The exception is in the last three factors, factors 10 through 12, where this was stretched to + or -.25 in order to have more than one item. (Kerlinger, pp. 650-687).

Findings:

The findings on the following table (2) address the strong effects of ethnicity, socioeconomic status upon procedures applied by some students as they encounter the school environment. The effect of ability group coefficients were much less than the writer expected when collecting data for the study. From the foregoing table it may also be seen that these covariates affect the different climate factors with various intensities; but also that the factors become less important as one goes down the table. The differences include all aspects of climate. Ability groups were not nearly as important as ethnicity and socioeconomic status in determining differences in perceptions of organizational climate.

Table 2:
Analysis of Covariance of Organziational Climate Factors by Ethnic Groups, Controlled for School, Socioeconomic Status and Ability Groups (N=804)

Sources of Variation:	Mean Square:	DF	F-ratio	Signif-icance	Regressn Coeffient
School Structures Factor:					
Covariates:	5.814	3	5.814	>.0001	
School	8.558	1	10.912	>.001	-0.090
SES	9.069	1	11.564	>.001	-0.006
Ability Group	2.144	1	2.734	--	0.044
Main Effect:					
Ethnic Groups	6.133	4	7.820	>.0001	
Explained	6.919	7	8.822	>.0001	
Residual	0.784	795			
Total	0.838	802			
Social Relationships Factor:					
Covariates:	5.144	3	7.315	>.0001	
School	11.236	1	15.977	>.0001	0.104
SES	2.031	1	2.888	--	0.003
Ability Group	3.983	1	5.663	>.01	-0.059
Main Effect:					
Ethnic Group	1.996	4	0.499	--	
Explained	2.621	7	3.727	>.001	
Residual	0.703	795			
Total	0.702	802			
Teacher Responsiveness Factor:					
Covariates:	2.086	3	3.164	>.05	
School	5.881	1	8.919	>.0001	0.104
SES	0.017	1	0.026	--	0.000
Ability Group	3.983	1	5.663	>.01	-0.059
Main Effect:					
Ethnic Group	1.072	4	1.626	>.001	
Explained	1.808	7	2.742	>.001	
Residual	0.659	795			
Total	0.669	802			
Academic Initiative Factor:					
Covariates:	10.208	3	19.514	>.0001	
School	1.397	1	2.670	--	0.036
SES	7.434	1	14.211	>.0001	-0.005
Ability Group	16.112	1	30.798	>.0001	0.120
Main Effect:					
Ethnic Groups	2.672	4	5.109	>.0001	
Explained	8.362	7	15.985	>.0001	
Residual	0.523	795			
Total	0.592	802			

The findings in the three parallel factor solutions below indicate a complexity that is far beyond multiple facets of organizational climate that we originally searched for. The complexity of these findings indicates differences in ap-

proaches to social situations, feelings about school work, participation in social activities and group activities, attending to tasks, and perceptions of how they are treated by their teachers.

The findings in table 3 indicate different numbers of factors, tapping different items with varying degrees of emphasis, while some did not load sufficiently on any factors that would indicate deep feelings so that they correlated together consistently among all of the students. Roughly a third of the items did not load consistently on any factors among any of the ethnic groups. This probably has a great deal to do with early adolescent turmoil and immaturity.

Table 3:

Summary of Organizational Climate Factors Differing Factors by Ethnic Perceptions

Personal Ethnic Identity:	Black:	Hispanic:	White:
Number of Students:	253	233	244
Number of Factors with Eigenvalues greater than unity:	11	12	10
Items Loading on Factors:	37	40	39
Items (omitted) with low factor loadings	24	21	22
Total Items	61	61	61

Table four indicates the clustering of items on the three comparative factor solutions for the three ethnic groups. While the differences in the factor structures is initially striking, there is more complexity to the findings than would appear on the surface. Items load on factors in contradictory ways; teachers are seen both as friendly, and suspicious and often angry. Logically one would expect social issues to be separated from academic issues and teachers. For these students they are clearly not separated. While there are some item linkages among Black and White factors, Hispanic factors are always different from Black and White factors. Black and White students seem to differ more in terms of motivations and interests. Hispanic students seem to be having very different experiences from their Black and White classmates.

Table 4:

Item-Factor Descriptions of Organizational Climate by Ethnic Group Perceptions

(N)	Black:(253)	Hispanic:(233)	White:(244)
Description:	51:Serious Discussions	32:Friendly Students	44:Teachers Interested
Item #'s:	3,20,34, 46,47,49, 50,54	4,6,10 22,32,33 38,39,40 47,50	14,20,22 26,35,37 44,48,50
Factor 2:			
Description:	38:Need Right Friends Here	49:Suspicious Teachers	61:Opposite Sex Friend
Item #'s 36,43,55,	24,27, 30 60	42,49,19 27,49,55	24,61,32 60
Factor 3:			
Description:	8:Looks Imp't	58:Not Int. Serious TV	11:Reputat'ns Dominate Rels
Item #'s:	8,17,31, 34,46	44,58,-1[illegible] 35,37	11,12,17 34,43,53
Factor 4:			
Description:	41:Quarreling	21:Not Int. in Nonfiction	5:Respect Teachers
Item #'s:	29,35,41	21,31,11 16	5,12,21 28
Factor 5:			
Description:	2:Need be friends with right people	53:Students lov learning	39:Like arts
Item #'s:	2,33,51 5	60,53,-26 -41	18,19,39
Factor 6:			
Description:	30:Smoking & Drugs	12:Friendships Easily Made	24:Opposite Sex Friends
Item #'s:	13,30,59	12,16,59 -20,-61	16,24,
Factor 7:			
Description:	41:Quarreling	43:Opposite Sex Friends	59:Friendly Students
Item #'s:	2,15,41	43,55,61 16,-29	15,-35,-37 -41,59
Factor 8:			
Description:	32:Friendly Students	46:School is boring	-58:Not int. in serious TV
Item #'s:	11,17,61	46,-51,-38 -28	-33,43,-58
Factor 9:			
Description:	58:Not int. in serious TV	52:Unkind Teasing	36,44,47*: Sensitivity
Item #'s:	38,53,58	52,43,37	-13,-22,-32 36,44,47

Table 4 (continued):
Item-Factor Descriptions of Organizational Climate by Ethnic Group Perceptions

	Black:	Hispanic:	White:
Factor 10:			
Description:	11:Reputations Dominate	22:Neatness Dominates	27:Loyalties imp't here
Item #'s:	11,52	3,22,46	-2,-8,27
Factor 11:			
Description:	47:Safety Imp't	1:Arts Imp't	none
Item #'s:	47,51	1,18,24	--
		-37,59	--
Factor 12:			
Description:	none	15:Not inters't in science talk	none
Item #'s:	--	15,-36,60	--

Discussion of Findings:

In looking at factor loadings for the first factors across the three ethnic groups, many issues that appear to be contradictory cluster together. Issues that would appear to basically aligned, redundant items, do not load on the same factors. Perhaps this is a function of early adolescence with its developmental confusion, physiological disturbances and social trauma. Both Black and White students see their teachers as interested in them, but the items are different and their are no item linkages in factors among the ethnic groups. Hispanic students put their emphasis on social issues.

Black students feel they are conscientious about school. They see themselves as serious about school, but they also say school is monotonous. Related in the first factor Black students see that their teachers are involved with students' feelings and being busy with student issues, teachers getting angry with students, school being "boring," concern for safety, suspicious teachers who don't trust students, clean classrooms, and students taking school work seriously. Perhaps some ohese perceptions have to do with the calamities of early adolescence and social activities dominated by adjustments to puberty, social development and other psychological and physical growth-related activities.

White students see their teachers as interested in them, but this is affiliated with social activities, being busy with many activities, orderliness, and new ideas being tried out, teacher efforts to plan and make things interesting, and good manners among students. Both Black and White students saw their teachers as interested in them, but these were different items that did not load together in a meaningful way.

Hispanic students were more concerned that their peers were friendly. School loyalty is important. Students in the school have discussions about school work on their own. Students in the school perceive that they work hard, both in and out of school. (These are two more examples of an items which should logically be connnected, but which do not load with a corresponding item that was important for the Black students). Hispanic students agreed with White students about orderliness in the school, but they also said they were sent home when they had colds and had to be neat and clean when they come to school, which the other groups did not say. Hispanic and White students agreed that the first factor was related in some way to the orderliness of the school.

In looking at the second tier of factors across the three ethnic groups, you will see that there is a difference in emphasis. Where the Black and White students were concerned about academic activities in the first factor, they are concerned with social concerns in the second factor. This is inverted for the Hispanic students. In the first factor Hispanic students were more involved with social activities. In the second factor Hispanic students are apprehensive toward teachers whom they perceive as suspicious.

While the Black and White students emphasize social activities in the second tier, the difference for White students is that they are more interested in the opposite sex relationships--while the Black students are concerned about having the right friends! Keep in mind the second factor for Black and White students link jointly on four items and the difference for the Black students is an emphasis on group solidarity.

Hispanic students link suspicious teachers together with smoking, drugs, drinking, messy lockers and desks, and the need to identify with a group of students and go along or be a loner.

In the third level of emphasis, factors across the three ethnic groups, the Black and White students again share two items in their factors, while the Hispanic students do not share any items with the others. While the Black students emphasized looks, the White students emphasized reputations. Both Blacks and Whites said that the teachers made you feel like a baby and that teachers easily got angry with students.

Along with reputations White students linked opposite sex relationships with an intrinsic love for learning. For Black students looks were linked together with teacher relationships and student boredom with school work and serious discussions. This would indicate basic differences in social pressures among the different ethnic groups.

Hispanic students indicate that they are not interested in things the way others seem to be: they indicate they are not interested in serious television programs, and they link this together with the interest teachers take in students, the teachers' planning, hard work and enthusiasm. There is also an inversely related item indicating that if you are not in a crowd, you are out on your own. Could it be that Hispanic students see more of a schism between themselves and the teachers than the Black or White students do?

Item number three asks the students if teachers really care about students. Item 40 asked if teachers take interest in students: Logically we would expect that these items should have loaded together on the same factor somewhere, but they do not. Clearly there are other issues causing items to load on factors. It is clear that these students are not intractable or affirmative about their teachers. But, as one reviews the factors and the fundamental framework linking social activities and academic activities, the teachers appear to be the critical link in describing how these factors fit together.

Other factors which follow become increasingly complex as items cluster together in varying patterns and as one looks downward on table four. Beyond factors three and four factors break down into varying patterns of interaction with the school experience and are probably caught up in the turmoil of early adolescence. Other social and academic issues meander through the table, only to be explicated by a second order factor analysis or discriminant analysis.

There is engaging substance in many of these factors, but many of the factors after the first few tiers appears to be an exercise in extracting labyrinthianly complex meanings, usually based upon negative feelings about school. After the first few factors it is difficult to extract meaningful and logical relationships among the items loading on the factors. We surmise from these findings that there is both an element of insight and an element of unavailing activity. There is the beginning of something interesting here, but there seems to be a limit to what can be accomplished beyond the first few items in the immediate study.

We divided these data again into socioeconomic groupings to see if there would be unique factors when regrouped according to socioeconomic groups. In the Lower and Upper SES groups there were 22 factors. In the Middle SES group there were 21 factors. Few of these factors was impressive for their emphasis upon a particular group of items that logically describes a particular dynamic in the perceptions of these students. Accordingly, we are concluding that there are limits to that which we can learn from early adolescents. Indeed, these data reflect much of what we can see

in classrooms with early adolescents in them: students who are sometimes children--sometimes adults; often brilliant, but forever forgetful.

Conclusions:

These students are short and plump or tall and gangling, and apparently never mediocre; they are inherently awkward, forever knocking things over and forgetting where they have placed things, what they are supposed to do next, or what they had to do for homework.

Certainly, these findings can only point toward conclusions that you could apply toward a middle school that has more than fifty percent of any ethnic group; the findings imply a trend toward the perceptions of one ethnic group dominating the school when it is in the majority. The conditions we found indicate the probability of differences among ethnic group perceptions within multiethnic middle schools when two or three ethnic groups are present and none numerically dominate the student body.

But, these findings do point toward the complexity of the early adolescent multiethnic-group encounter. They point toward group solidarity that is enforced along ethno-linguistic and cultural lines (both by background experience, choice and involuntary interactions with others). As one examines items as they cluster together for particular groups one can interpolate a "we"--"they" feeling throughout. Teachers are seen by these students as angry and sensitive at the same time, but always in terms of feelings outside their own ethnic group perceptions.

These data also point toward pressures that the different ethnic groups are experiencing: the blacks seem to interpret everything in terms of prejudice, the white students seem to be under some pressure to socialize with peers of the opposite sex and Hispanic students seem to organize their information along linguistically based lines that are clearly distinct from the other students.

It is equally possible that early adolescent students are so consummed with themselves and their immediate group that they have very little perception of the larger picture of school experiences at all. There is much more here to be pursued. We recommend that this study be replicated with an older age group and that other studies of cross-cultural perceptions be completed as potentially fruitful areas of research to gain insight into the complexities of human experiences across ethnic boundaries.

Implications for School Leaders:

These findings suggest that the social interaction among early adolescent students in multiethnic middle schools has a deeper infrastructure than previous discussions of cross-cultural social interaction, or of ethnic prejudice have previously indicated. The students from different ethnic backgrounds associate school events together differently, and among identifiable similarities, they place a different emphasis upon their importance.

Together with this, however, teachers appear to be the critical linkage in the perceptions of the students. The implication appears to be that teachers can be the critical element in leading ethnic students toward greater harmony and mutual understanding. If teachers could begin to understand their roles as leaders of adolescents, and develop leadership skills in terms of a stronger role for middle school teachers, then these schools would be significantly strengthened.

The strongest aspect of these findings is that the teachers have a real leadership role to play in causing greater social cohesiveness in multiethnic middle schools. In no way does this idea interfere with the role of school administrators. But, teachers have a leadership role to play in upgrading social interaction in these schools. Where professionals working in the bureaucracy perceive a division between social activities and work activities, these students have no idea of this.

School, work, social are all pretty serious business. If school is perceived as "boring," it is both a favorite word and a reaction to routines in school life. Where many people look toward our schools for predictability and stab-ility, early adolescents have so much changing going on around and inside themselves that all else is boring and dull. In order to make middle schools work better teachers need to jump into the informal activities of the school, to become familiar with activities in the cafeteria, bathrooms and other school areas of where there is little teacher control.

In developing curricula to bring the multiethnic middle school together, attention needs to be given to peer problem solving skills, the development of social awareness and communication skills. All of this needs to be articulated in terms of cross-cultural understanding and include discussions about different frames of reference and differences in perceptions based upon ethno-linguistic perceptions of shared social and academic events.

Banks suggests a Multiethnic Curriculum which is broadly based and interdisciplinary. Banks outlines a spiraling

curriculum for Kindergarten through grade eight, including immigration-migration, power, racism, perception, intercultural communication and acculturation. Perhaps values clarification could be added as well. (Banks, pp. 50-131).

In developing curricula for the multiethnic middle school the curriculum needs to join together the language curriculum and the social studies curriculum. Vocabulary and semantic meanings, connotative language, figurative language and metaphors and cultural features of language should be dealt with in terms of the requirements of integrated social activities in these schools. Foreign language and culture may be taught in much the same way as "two way" bilingual programs, where students learn from each others language and culture. Critical to the success of schools articulated toward multiethnic early adolescents is the establishment of "social-learning environments" where curriculum and social activities are merged fostering positive social activities and academic learning simultaneously.

In articulating a combined social studies-language arts curriculum, methodologically combining informal social activities and informal learning arrangements, students will learn to apply critical thinking skills to social activities. The curriculum will develop human relations skills, develop personal self-identity in terms of complex social networks, develop an understanding of the physiology of adolescent growth and its impact on social relationships. Learning activities will occur in smaller "T-group" arrangements, with closer relationships among teachers and students. Students will learn how to keep friends, make new ones, how to be assertive without being aggressive, and how to use social "networks" for the advancement of positive social interaction.

In accepting early adolescence for what it is, textbooks needs to be either disgarded or used as incidental tools in developing cognitive growth at a time when physical bodies are budding and hormones bounding forth to interfere with everything that made sense before. Early adolescence is a time of intense social and physical growth; it is not a time for sedate learning activities. It is a time for an "Action Curriculum," filled with social activities which include critical thinking skills applied to social interaction and cross-cultural communication; especially oral communication.

In the development of teachers' abilities to deal with these problems, the arrangement of pedagogical work may be rearticulated in terms of more informal teaching and incorporating academic work in terms of social interaction with less dependence upon standardized curricula, standardized testing, and formalized instruction. Many of the students in this age group seem to have lost their ability to attend

to learning tasks, endlessly forgetful and utterly mindless. They may be so involved in the maturational process that they are unable to attend to learning or concentrate on anything. Perhaps it would be more productive to forget traditional teaching methods and rearticulate teaching in terms of the overwhelming needs of early adolescent social needs and the related adjustments these students are making.

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